'Life-saving' heart rehabilitation group celebrates 30th birthday in Milton Keynes

A 'life-saving' group that restores people's confidence after they have had a heart attack is celebrating its 30th birthday.

Milton Keynes Community Cardio-pulmonary Group (MKCCG) opened its doors in 1989 and cardiac rehabilitation in the community in Milton Keynes was born.

Cutting the cake
Gill Robinson MBE, who is pictured cutting the cake, founded the group with five members, £50 and one exercise bike. Since then the group has flourished and swelled to 450 members.

It now offers rehabilitation to those with pulmonary disease as well as those with heart disease.

To celebrate the 30th Anniversary the members of the group along with their families and friends enjoyed a picnic at Heron’s Lodge Guide Centre.

Each member attends a weekly two-hour exercise and monitoring session which is carefully structured so that the individual exercises at an appropriate level to their ability and need.

The sessions are conducted by specifically qualified health professionals and exercise teachers, and trained volunteers.

One member said: "I had a heart attack before I was 50 and was scared stiff. MKCCG was a life-saver for me. It gave me the chance to meet people who'd gone through similar experiences, which provided emotional support. It taught me how to improve my lifestyle in practical ways. It helped me get fitter with a regular exercise programme."

"Each session is the source of much laughter which is always therapeutic. I've been attending the group now for well over 20 years."

The work of the group helps members not only to remain fit and healthy but also to reduce or avoid the necessity for visits to their GP or hospital stays and to remain independent thus relieving pressure on the NHS and social services.

Founder Gill Robinson said: 'The whole concept of rehabilitation in the hospital was new and continuing with a community group was not really considered. I felt that people still felt vulnerable even after attending the valuable hospital group.

"However it was right to help them to move on from the hospital and become a person again rather than a patient. These two factors spurred the whole thing. I never imagined that I would still be doing this 30 years later. It has been an absolute privilege to see people regain their confidence and start to truly live again.'
The group used a number of different venues in Milton Keynes before settling in its current base, Hinton Hall in Whaddon Way, Bletchley, in 1995.

It now runs 10 sessions a week, including one at York House in Stony Stratford for people with COPD.